

VZCZCXYZ0004
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHGP #0862/01 2511006
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 081006Z SEP 09
FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7170
INFO RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0255
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0915

C O N F I D E N T I A L SINGAPORE 000862

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EAP/MTS - M. COPPOLA
DEPARTMENT ALSO FOR IO/RHS - C. NEVILLE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/08/2019
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [IR](#)
SUBJECT: SINGAPORE IS UNSUITABLE FOR UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

REF: STATE 90247

Classified By: Political Unit Chief Dan Jassem for reason 1.4(d).

¶1. (C) In response to reftel demarche, Post has contacted the United Nations and Legal Issues Branch of the International Organisations Directorate in Singapore's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) to determine whether Singapore would consider running for a seat on the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC). MFA has not yet responded. Pending Singapore's response, this cable will explain Post's assessment, in accordance with reftel paragraph 7, that Singapore is not a suitable HRC candidate.

¶2. (C) First, Singapore's own human rights record does not recommend it for inclusion on the HRC. Every year, the Department's Country Report on Human Rights Practices notes ongoing human rights deficiencies, most notably with respect to freedoms of speech, assembly, and political participation, but also in other areas such as indefinite preventive detention without trial or meaningful judicial review. Unlike in some countries, where ongoing human rights violations may reflect actions by government agents without official sanction or a lack of governmental capacity to prevent them from occurring, in Singapore the most prominent restrictions on fundamental freedoms are the intended results of government policy. Representatives of the Government of Singapore have repeatedly proclaimed that they are proud of their system and intend to maintain it regardless of criticism from "the West."

¶3. (SBU) Second, Singapore has a small diplomatic staff in Geneva and would presumably have as much capacity as other small countries to staff an HRC membership. However, Singapore already participates in many multilateral organizations and initiatives relative to its tiny size. In Post's experience, Singapore is acutely sensitive to the danger of overextending itself by taking on additional roles.

¶4. (C) Third, Singapore would not be reliably aligned with the United States on key issues before the HRC. Singapore is a member of both ASEAN and the Non-Aligned Movement. As such, Singapore is committed to principles of internal non-interference and is not likely to advocate shifting the HRC back to a country-specific focus. Singapore's reluctance to take a strong stand against the Burmese junta in ASEAN, and Singapore's refusal to support Kosovo independence at the United Nations, are representative illustrations of ongoing divergence between American and Singaporean interests on country-specific issues. In general, Singapore's conduct in the General Assembly - where it hardly ever votes with the United States - is a good indicator of what could be expected from Singapore on the HRC.

¶5. (C) With respect to alignment on Israel, Post does not believe that Singapore's long-standing quiet friendship with

Israel would translate into Singaporean assistance in mitigating the HRC's anti-Israel focus. On the contrary, Singapore's good relations with Israel would likely place it in a delicate position on the HRC, to the extent that any public show of support for Israel could inflame tensions with Singapore's Muslim-majority neighbors. As a recent example of Singapore's failure to defend Israel publicly, Singapore did not dissent from the October 2008 "Contribution by the Asian Region to the Durban Review Conference," which was submitted by Sri Lanka but stated that it was endorsed by the permanent representatives and ambassadors of all United Nations Asian Group countries. A number of paragraphs in that document addressed Israeli-Palestinian issues in a manner that the prior U.S. Administration found objectionable.

¶16. (C) Fourth, Post does not believe that Singapore would act independently of its regional group if elected to the HRC. As a small country, Singapore is traditionally sensitive to the views of the larger Asian powers. Post notes that China will continue to be on the HRC, and Malaysia and Thailand are likely to join. Those three countries would automatically constitute three significant constraints on Singapore's freedom of maneuver as an HRC member.

¶17. (C) Based on the factors described above, Post believes that Singapore - even if it proved willing to seek a seat on the HRC - would not help to advance U.S. objectives for the HRC. Post therefore recommends that the Department refrain from encouraging Singapore to put itself forward as a candidate.

¶18. (U) Post will report Singapore's response to the remainder of reftel demarche when received.

Visit Embassy Singapore's Classified website:
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eap/singapore/ind ex.cfm>
SHIELDS